

PROJECT ICARUS

Written by

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FADE IN

INT. O'MALLEY'S BAR - NIGHT

The smell of tobacco smoke is only undercut by the pungent scent of hot sweaty men. The sounds of laughter, shouting, and excitement fill the room. At the bar-counter, two frosty MUGS are filled past full with cheap terrible tasting beer. The beers are then delivered to two sweaty half-naked men in the center of a ring of people. The smallest of the two men, JAMES (20's, tall, average build), sits on a chair at the edge of the circle of people. His friend, ERIC, rubs him on the shoulders like a coach would do for a boxer.

ERIC

Are you sure about this James?
You're completely wasted.

JAMES

(sloppy Irish accent)
It's alright Danny Boy. I've got
the luck o' the Irish on my side.

ERIC

You're only Irish when you're
drinking.

JAMES

(sloppy Irish accent)
Aren't we all?

ERIC

You are the worst Irishman. Not
even including the fact that you
only seem able to talk in Irish
cliches.

James picks up the PINT that had been delivered to him and drinks the whole thing.

ERIC (CONT'D)

If you lose your rent money, you're
sleeping outside.

JAMES

(sloppy accent)
Relax laddy...

ERIC

That's Scotland...

JAMES
(sloppy accent)
Look here lad, if I lost this,
could I consider m'self a proper
Irishman? I submit to you I could
not.

ERIC
James! You're not really Irish!

JAMES
You're not really a man!

ERIC
You're from Texas!

JAMES
You're sexy.

Beat.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about saying you're not a
man. That was mean.

ERIC
You are very drunk.

JAMES
You keep saying that. I'm not drunk
but I think some of these other
guys might be.

A "referee" enters the ring and looks at the two shirtless
gentlemen.

REFEREE
Are you men ready? A reminder. No
scratching or biting. Nothing below
the belt. Have a good fight
gentlemen.

James stands and immediately collapses back into the chair.
Eric helps him back up.

ERIC
That inspires confidence.

REFEREE
Whenever you're ready men!

James sways in place. He runs in for the first shot, misses
by a lot, and stumbles to the ground.

He springs back up to his feet in time to see several blows which land near his face and chest. James puts his hand up to block, looks for an opening, then delivers several body shots. The other man pushes James back. James comes back with a haymaker. The other man dodges and delivers several a few heavy punches to James' face. James stumbles back and dabs the fresh blood from his face. James shakes his head to clear his mind and assumes a fighting stance in the center of the ring. This time it's serious business. The big man throws a few wild bunches. James easily dodges them like a pro and throws two punishing body shots as a response, followed by a head shot. The big man throws wild heavy punch after wild heavy punch. James dodges a few but the others land hard. James sluggishly tries to get in more shots but he misses most and the others have no strength to them. The big man delivers the knock out punches and it's over.

The Bartender appears from the crowd.

BARTENDER

As agreed, here's your tab...

James looks at the price.

JAMES

Holy shit!

The Bartender then points to the big man and his friend.

BARTENDER

...and, of course, *their* tab.

James looks at their tab.

JAMES

Shit...

BARTENDER

How would you like to pay for that?

JAMES

Well, you see, here's the thing-

Before that thought is over James and Eric are bolting for the exit. The big man and his friend follow hot in pursuit. Eric and James explode out of the bar and into the night air. James directs ERIC to go the other way and he does. James takes off left.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAINY STREETS - CONTINUOUS

James sprints through the rain soaked night, turning corners and hurdling over obstacles but still the beating footsteps and heavy breathing can be heard from close behind.

JAMES

Oh, my God.

James beats it around a corner and not long after the big man comes around after him. Suddenly there's a cry for help from a far off MAN. James stops at the sound of the distress call. He looks back and sees the big man storming toward him. James takes off in the direction of the call, straight toward the big man. Just before James is about to collide he pushes himself up with some invisible force and vaults over the big man. The man just blinks in bewilderment as James races away.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

James swerves around a corner to see a MUGGER pointing a GUN at another man.

JAMES

Hey! You put that gun down!

The Mugger swings around and points the gun at James.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Oh, shit!

James dives behind the wall again.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I did not think this through!

MUGGER

What are you doing here?! Go away!

JAMES

Look I'm just here to help that horribly distressed individual you were previously pointing the gun at.

James steps out from behind the wall.

JAMES (CONT'D)

For, you see, I am a hero of super--
oh God...

Just that moment James throws up on in the alley.

MUGGER

What's wrong with you?

JAMES

What do you mean? Mentally or physically? Because physically, I may have had one or two beers tonight. Mentally? A lot of things at this moment.

Beat.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hold on, let me get my game face on.

James shakes his head back and forth and slaps himself in the face a bit to wake up.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Alright, I'm good to go.

MUGGER

Don't move any closer or I'll shoot!

James just shoots him an "are you serious?" look, waves his hand, and the clip falls out of the gun. James waves his hand again and the hammer on the pistol slides back and ejects the round that was in the chamber. James holds his hand straight out and the gun is pulled right out of the Mugger's hand and floats in mid-air. With a few hand movements the gun breaks apart, cleanly, piece-by-piece, until it's all on the ground. James looks satisfied.

BIG MAN

There you are!

James' satisfaction melts. He whips around to see the BIG MAN standing a foot away from him. Quick foot steps can be heard behind him. It's the Mugger trying to get the best of him. James sucker punches the BIG MAN in the gut to incapacitate him. He then swivels around and puts his arms up as guards. The MUGGER throws a few punches but they all bounce off an unseen barrier. James lowers his guard and dodges the next few punches. James lands a few of his own with just enough time to pivot back toward the BIG MAN who is now fully recovered and is swinging as well. James dodges and punches hard, swings around, and lands a few cheap shots on the MUGGER. Finally, the MUGGER and the BIG MAN attack at once.

James stops both of their fists for a minute before pushing them both back off their feet. Mugger lands in a pile of garbage. Big man lands in the street.

James turns his attention towards the MUGGER first. The MUGGER pulls himself from a pile of garbage. James readjusts his stance. From a distance, James picks up the MUGGER until he's hovering 10 feet above the ground.

JAMES

Now, listen to me! I'm giving you this one chance only! You're going to go home, take a long shower, and you're gonna rethink your life! And you're never going to break any law ever!

With that, James hurls him back into the pile of garbage. The MUGGER quickly stands up and runs away, dropping the stolen wallet in the process. James whips around, back to the BIG MAN.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And you! I don't have any money to give you! I'm sorry!

BIG MAN

Whatever! Keep it! Just let me go!

JAMES

Go.

The BIG MAN sprints away. James turns to the victim.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Is there anything--

Before he can finish the sentence, the victim takes off without even grabbing his wallet.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Wait! You forgot... a lot of things. Not the least of which is a 'thank you'.

James groans, massages his sore body, and walks away.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

James bursts in through the door, slams it shut and collapses, face-first, into the couch. A voice calls from a different room.

VICTORIA
Who just came in?

James mumbles into the couch. VICTORIA emerges from her room.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Hey James. Where's Eric?

James mumbles into the couch again.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Where's your shirt?

James turns his head to the side, lazily glances around the room, then shrugs. VICTORIA looks down a moment then stands up quickly.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Well, you want some ice cream?

James nods his head and VICTORIA goes to the freezer. She prepares a bowl of ice-cream then fills a plastic sandwich bag with ice-cubes. She places the bowl on the coffee table in front of James then places the ice-bag to his bruises. VICTORIA observes the scrapes and bruises and sighs. Just then ERIC comes in through the front door. James and VICTORIA both look up to see a beaten, bloody looking ERIC.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Oh my God, Eric! What happened?!

JAMES
Jesus! Are you alright?

ERIC just shakes his head through his tears and painfully limps to the bathroom without saying a word. VICTORIA follows him to the bathroom. She helps him remove his shirt and pants and treats his wounds.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - LATER

James and ERIC sit with their backs to the opposite walls, facing each other. ERIC is covered in bandages and bruises. They both hang their heads low.

JAMES
Eric, I'm really sorry.

ERIC shakes his head.

ERIC
I don't blame you.

JAMES
I plan to pay you back all the
money they took from you.

ERIC
You don't need to do that.

JAMES
I need to do something.

ERIC
I need you to stop blaming
yourself.

JAMES
I can't do that. I am so, so sorry
and I need you-

ERIC
James, just STOP!

A long silence follows.

ERIC (CONT'D)
I'm gonna go to bed.

JAMES
Alright, we'll talk about it
tomorrow.

ERIC
Whatever...

Eric walks into his room. James waits a minute then stands up
and walks out the front door.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

James strolls down the street, hands in pockets, and
considers what just happened. James starts to get a strange
feeling. He looks back to see a shadowy hooded man following
behind him. James keeps walks nervously around the next
corner he finds. The mysterious man turns the corner as well
and continues his pursuit. James rounds another random
corner. The man follows again. James rounds another corner
into an alley and waits. The man walks around the corner.
James grabs the man by his clothes and slams him against the
wall.

JAMES

Why are you following me?! Is this about the money? Because I already settled this once tonight.

HOODED MAN

Behind you.

Suddenly, James is grabbed from behind in a full sleeper hold. Within seconds, James loses consciousness.

FADE TO BLACK.

BLACK

Voices slowly begin to fade in.

VOICE

...assaulted two men... level 2,
not a major threat...

VOICE 2

...we gotta push this one through
quick. He's waking up.

The black hood gets whipped off of James's head.

INT. PROCESSING ROOM

James looks around frantically. James struggles with the cuffs binding his hands and feet. A man stands in the corner and examines a file. He looks up from the file, nods to the man behind James, and the man leaves the room. The man in the corner closes the file, walks to the table, and places the file on the table. He sits opposite James and examines him for a bit.

JAMES

Where am I? What am I doing here?

EXAMINER

You seem like a pretty smart man
Mr. Miller, and a man as smart as
you would already know why your
here.

James looks around and laughs.

JAMES

I don't know what you're talking
about! You've got the wrong guy!

EXAMINER
Try all you'd like Mr. Miller.
You're not getting out of here.

JAMES
HELP! HELP! He's touching me
inappropriately!

EXAMINER
Your display last night was very
impressive Mr. Miller.

JAMES
Where's my lawyer?

EXAMINER
Ha! Please.

JAMES
I'm not saying anything until I see
my lawyer.

EXAMINER
You promise?

The EXAMINER goes back to the file.

EXAMINER (CONT'D)
You're James Harrison Miller. Age:
25. Born in Fort Worth, Texas to
Scott and Anne Miller. You're
father left you when you were
young, your mother was killed in a
house fire when you were 13.

JAMES
Stop, that's enough. You've got the
wrong guy.

EXAMINER	JAMES
You lived for many years with your Godparents until you moved to Boston, Massachusetts where you--	Stop, just stop. I'm not him. You've got the wrong GUY!

EXAMINER
Mr. Miller, we have fingerprints,
photo I.D., fucking witnesses for
Christ's sake! We know who the fuck
you are.

(MORE)

EXAMINER (CONT'D)

With matters like this, you don't make it through those particular set of doors without us being sure you are who we think you are. You're here because you have a particular set of skills that have become of great interest to the United States government. Now, what will happen is, tomorrow you will be blindfolded and taken to a secret facility where the government houses men and women of your particular age group that it deems in need of special care. It is in these types of facilities that you will remain until such a time as further legislation is passed... or you die. Whichever comes first.

EXT. UNKNOWN WOODS - NEXT DAY

James bumps along a dirt road in an old military jeep. Two armed military personnel bookend him in the back seat. James looks down at his cuffs then looks back up at the scenery around him. Suddenly, the trees stop at a flat iron wall which stands about 15 feet tall. The DRIVER stops the Jeep, puts it in park, and walks out to go somewhere. James drowns in the silence. James takes a deep breath and opens his mouth to say something.

GUARD

No talking!

James deflates quickly. A minute later the gate starts to open as the Driver walks back up to the Jeep. He throws it in gear and takes off again.

As they enter the compound, James' eyes land on a sign which reads 'Carter Institute.' Then he notices the institute itself which is strikingly plain. It looks more like a college dorm room than anything else. Nothing looks more than a couple of years old.

On the grounds, a few students practice their abilities. James looks in awe at these students. One in particular catches his eye; a beautiful girl sitting on a pillar of earth that she had ripped from the ground herself.

INT. CARTER INSTITUTE - CONTINUOUS

The JEEP DRIVER brings James into the lobby and sets down two full duffle bags on the floor. LANCASTER stands with his back to the two. When the bags are dropped, Lancaster turns around with a hard grace. What's revealed is an old face, weathered and stern, framed by long grey hair with thick-rimmed glasses. Though through the coldness is an empathetic kindness buried behind his eyes.

LANCASTER

Hello Thomas.

DRIVER

Is there anything else you need,
sir?

LANCASTER

No Thomas; that'll be all.

The DRIVER moves his arm to salute, stops himself mid-motion, then drops his arm. He shoots Lancaster a disapproving look before walking out the door.

LANCASTER (CONT'D)

You must be James. I'm Robert
Lancaster. I'm the Director of
Student Life here at the Carter
Institute. Pick up your bags and
I'll show you to your room.

James and Lancaster walk towards the room. James levitates the bags off of the floor and they float behind him.

INT. JAMES' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door swings open. James walks in his new room and sets his bags on the bed. Lancaster watches from the hallway.

LANCASTER

Your door code is pinned to the
cork board. Memorize it and destroy
the paper. Meals are at 8, 12, and
6:30. They'll last an hour-and-a-
half but you have free access to
our pantry and kitchen area any
time. I think you'll find it should
more than suit your needs, whatever
they may be. There are rec rooms on
the first and third floors, and
every day at 2:30 students are
allowed an hour of outside time.

(MORE)

LANCASTER (CONT'D)

Other than that, the outside is completely off limits. Everything else, you'll learn as you go. There is one other matter, though, that needs to be talked about before we can move on. For the first few weeks, you will not be allowed to use your powers at any time. After that, powers are limited to your outside time only. Is that understood?

JAMES

No- I mean yes... I mean, I fell asleep through part of it but I think I got the gist. Meals, rec rooms, facism, yard time, no powers.

Lancaster stares at James with a look of a parent staring down a child.

LANCASTER

Your time here at the Carter Institute will not be easy. In fact, it may be some of the hardest of your life. My advise to you is this, adjust accordingly. Have a good day James.

INT. JAMES' ROOM - NEXT MORNING

The alarm clock shows 10:21 AM. James rolls over and squints at the clock. He rubs his eyes and sits up on the edge of the bed. James lazily strides to the two duffle bags now sitting on his desk. He opens one up and sees it's full of khaki pants and polo shirts. He opens the other one and it's got some dress clothes, some athletic clothes, and some warm weather/cold weather attire. James sighs.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

James shuffles, half awake, down the hallway in his new uniform. As he's about to pass another student they bump him on the shoulder and walk a few paces before turning around.

RUDE STUDENT

Hey! Watch where your walking New Guy!

James lifts his hands, ready to blast the student into tomorrow. He stops himself and turns to see an instructor looking back. He then looks back at the RUDE STUDENT.

RUDE STUDENT (CONT'D)

Yeah! That's what I thought!

James steams as he continues walking to the kitchen.

INT. INSTITUTE KITCHEN - LATER

A single egg sizzles in the pan before being scooped up and placed on a sandwich. James puts some bacon on for the final touch and puts the top slice on the sandwich. James quickly spins around and grabs some orange juice out of the fridge. When he spins back around he notices his sandwich is gone. He turns and looks toward the door and a student is walking out with his sandwich in hand.

JAMES

That's my-- (sigh) Never mind.

James turns back to the counter and there's a student squatting there.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Ah! Holly shit!

TELEPORTING STUDENT

Thanks New Guy!

The student grabs the juice and disappears in a cloud of smoke.

JAMES

Great...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

James walks down the hallway and cautiously nibbles on a banana. Among the groups of people chatting and walking up and down the hallway, a single group stands out. They seem to almost stride above all the others. The man who stands out the most is a tall, black haired man (thin but surprisingly muscular) brimming with suaveness and confidence. A step or two behind him is the rock pillar girl from the front lawn. Small and sweet looking, with long Scarlet hair. James walks past them but continues to watch her as she walks. He walks backwards until. He runs into someone.

STUDENT

Hey! Watch out!

JAMES

Sorry.

He turns and jogs away.

EXT. INSTITUTE GROUNDS - NOON

CLOSE ON LOUDSPEAKER

ANNOUNCER

(OVER SPEAKER)

Your daily allotted yard time has begun and will run for the next hour. Remember, the slightest disturbance will be met with extreme force. Success can only come through restraint. Hubris is dangerous. And finally, maintain a safe environment at all times. That is all.

CUT TO:

James walks through the yard. He tries to pass by unnoticed but he quickly becomes aware that everyone is looking at him which makes him very uncomfortable. It becomes apparent that the other students are closing in around him. Eventually the path in front of him is blocked. James turns around and the way behind him is blocked as well. ALEX; a ripped, 7 foot, hulk-like man with a posh British accent, steps forward.

ALEX

So, you're the new guy?

JAMES

...and I take it you don't want to be friends.

ALEX

Smart, isn't he? Well, what do you do?

JAMES

I have the power of super couponing. The government was afraid of my ability to buy 100 rolls of toilet paper for a dollar.

ALEX

How did someone like you ever make it onto the government radar?

JAMES

How did someone like you ever fit through the door?

ALEX

You're not looking too smart anymore.

JAMES

Seriously, did they have to build the school around you or are you outside because you physically live out here?

Alex steps up to him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Is this fronting? Are you fronting me?

ALEX

Let me teach you how things work around here, New Guy. This is Fort Carter and, around here, I'm the guy you don't mess with.

Alex lifts James easily off the ground.

JAMES

In what context? If this is a cooking battle, I think I can take you.

ALEX

You're not too bright.

JAMES

Your *face* is stupid.

ALEX

Allow me to begin your lessons.

Alex strikes James fiercely in the gut twice then once in the face.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Did you get that?

JAMES

(out of breath)

I don't think I got that.

Alex knees him hard in the ribs.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(out of breath)
Aaagh! I think I got it that time.

Alex throws James on the ground. James doubles over in pain and heaves to catch his breath. He looks up at the other students but everyone one just stares at him or have already begun to disperse.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Great...

INT. INFIRMARY - LATER

James groans and shuffles into the infirmary leaning his head back to stifle the blood coming from his broken nose. The DOCTOR (a scruffy, unshaven man) looks up from his computer to see the broken-looking man now in front of him. The Doctor doesn't lift a sing finger.

DOCTOR
Damn.

James just looks at him quizzically.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
You must be the new guy. Here, come
sit down on this table.

James shuffles to the table. The Doctor stands and walks to the table.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
What hurts?

JAMES
My face.

DOCTOR
...but it's just your face, right?

James nods as much as he can with his bleeding nose.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Alright, I'll start with the nose.
Okay?

JAMES
Yeah, alright.

The Doctor moves toward his nose.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Wait, wait, wait!

DOCTOR
What? Something wrong?

JAMES
No, I just- is it going to hurt?

DOCTOR
Yes. A lot.

JAMES
Then I don't want to do it.

DOCTOR
That's not an option.

JAMES
Alright...

Crack! James screams in pain. After moment the screaming subsides.

DOCTOR
Hurts like a bitch, don't it?

JAMES
I really don't like you right now.

The Doctor chuckles and walks to the back. He appears again with two shot glasses of whiskey.

DOCTOR
My prescription, both for the pain and for the ill-will, is booze.

JAMES
Aah, alcohol. Medicine I can get behind.

They both click glasses then drink.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Oh man! (beat) You're not a normal doctor are you?

DOCTOR
I don't know if you've noticed but this is not a normal place.

Silence.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

You wanna know my advice? This pain you're feeling? Remember what it feels like. Accept it or block it out but it's going to be with you for the rest of your life. Things are not going to be easy for you guys. In fact, they're only going to get a lot worse.

Beat.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Anyway, let's go get some ice for your face.

SEQUENCE

The next 2-3 weeks fly by in moments as James just moves from one boring situation to another, making several boring trips to the 3RD FLOOR REC ROOM to do one thing or another. All this dullness is only broken up by the occasional fight with one bully or another. Every now and then, when he's sure absolutely no one and nothing is watching, he will levitate a pencil or bend a paper clip with his mind.

INT. 3RD FLOOR REC ROOM - ONE BORING AFTERNOON

James is watching some random detective show that he's not even remotely interested in when suddenly a man comes flopping over the back of the couch with a bag of pretzels in hand. Pretzels go flying everywhere. The man (CONNOR) pushes up his thick-rimmed glasses and throws James a look like they were already good friends. James can't help but smile at this.

CONNOR

Hey, how's it going? Whatcha watching?

James just looks stunned. They watch TV for a minute and Connor munches on Pretzels.

TV

I swear, I was at the docks. You can check with my co-workers.

CONNOR

(mouth full of pretzels)
Horseshit! Absolute horseshit!

JAMES
How can you tell?

Connor swallows.

CONNOR
I can read it all over him. Just
look at him. Are we even watching
the same show? It's so obvious.

JAMES
I guess I'm just not good at
reading people.

CONNOR
I am. It's a gift of mine. I bet I
can tell what you're thinking right
now. You're thinking about how much
you hate "those dumb bitches from
Real Housewives of wherever."

JAMES
You cheated.

CONNOR
How's that?

JAMES
That's what everyone thinks.

Connor laughs.

CONNOR
Fair enough.

JAMES
You're a psychopath aren't you?

CONNOR
Telepath.

JAMES
Same thing.

Connor smiles wide.

CONNOR
I like you. You don't miss a thing.

JAMES
So, how did you know he was lying?

CONNOR
What's that?

JAMES

How did you know the guy on TV was lying? You can't read his thoughts.

CONNOR

Simple.

JAMES

How?

CONNOR

It's a rerun.

Beat.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

You know, one of these days I'm gonna get someone with that mind reading thing and it's going to be awesome.

JAMES

If only you weren't locked up in here.

CONNOR

If only I wasn't locked up in here. It's the school's official slogan. It's on all the t-shirts.

JAMES

So, this is a school.

CONNOR

Well, not in the traditional sense, or any sense really. I don't know if you've noticed but, no classes no teachers. Still, saying school and students and faculty is still easier than calling it what it is.

JAMES

...and what's that?

CONNOR

A prison. Damn near close to one at least.

JAMES

So, if this is a prison, who's the Warden?

CONNOR

Well, Lancaster is the face, you've met him already, but the real Warden is General Carter. He's the guy with his name above the door. Most of the students call this place Ft. Carter. Carter himself, well, the names range. Fuhrer Carter, Adolph Carter, or just Der Fuhrer. The names get less creative and more amateur from there. General Dickfingers is one of my personal favorites.

JAMES

Thanks for the lesson.

CONNOR

Any time.

JAMES

Why are you just coming to me now?

CONNOR

I survive because no one really knows me or about me. I make it my business to stay off of everyone's radar and in return, no one has any reason to harass me. The downside of this strategy is that it relies on me not really making my presence known so I don't interact much. Before you ask, I chose you because you seemed interesting. And before you ask, no, I don't have many friends. And before you ask, it's because most people don't really like the whole mind reading thing. But don't you find it annoying that I know what you're going to say before you say it, that I know what you're thinking right now, and at all other times as well.

James just smiles and chuckles.

JAMES

What am I thinking right now?

Connor smiles.

CONNOR

See? I like you. You don't miss a thing.